

2015 Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, Staff, and Study Committee

Commission Staff

J. Brandon Wilson: Executive Director since 2000. She was Chairman of the Study Committee that spurred adoption of the Historic District Ordinance in 1985, established the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission shortly thereafter, and pioneered the designation of single-building local historic districts. Brandon also oversaw the adoption of other local historic districts in 1989, 2003, and 2010, and shepherded the Demolition Review Ordinance from the initial draft through adoption. She has directed numerous grant projects for the repair and restoration of municipally-owned historic properties throughout the City.

Kristi Chase: Preservation Planner since 2001 and resident of the Bow Street Local Historic District. Kristi and her partner have been actively restoring their home for many years and won a Preservation Award in 1996. Kristi works closely with owners of historic properties, helping them with both technical assistance and application reviews. She is knowledgeable about architectural history, methods of building research, and resources to aid in preserving historic properties.

Commission Members

Dick Bauer (Real Estate Lawyer): Chairman of the Commission since May 2008 and Member since 2003. Dick is a senior attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services and has degrees in both law and urban studies. He is the Somerville representative on the Middlesex Canal Commission, Co-Chair of the Jewish Labor Committee, Co-President of Congregation Kahal B'Raira, and has been an active volunteer for many local non-profit organizations. He and his wife received a Director's Award in 2006 for outstanding work on their house.

Abby Freedman (Citizen/Historic District Resident): Vice Chairman of the Commission since May 2008 and Member since 2005. Abby is an independent filmmaker and community videographer. She has been an active member of the Union Square Focus Group, and previously served on the Arts Union Street Architecture Committee and the City's Cable Advisory Commission. Abby and her husband have been restoring their designated Prospect Hill home for over 25 years, and still find lots to do! It was through her efforts and outreach that the Aldersey-Summit Local Historic District was greatly expanded in 2003.

Jillian Adams (Architectural Historian/Citizen): Member since 2012. Jillian has a degree in historic preservation and extensive experience managing complicated restoration projects in both the public and private sectors. For several years she was assistant administrator for the Lowell Historic Board and a grants program manager at Historic Boston Incorporated. In 2009, she launched her own firm as a preservation project consultant helping faith-based and non-profit organizations develop and support purposeful restoration projects in transitional neighborhoods.

Alan Bingham (Citizen/Historic District Resident): Alternate member since 2011. Alan has extensive experience renovating historic homes, first in Australia, then in New England, and now his 1870s home in Davis Square. He has a wide ranging academic background that includes management studies at the NSW Institute of Technology and the University of Phoenix as well as a philosophy degree from Sydney University. Alan has many years of management experience in the healthcare industry, journalism writing, and a strong financial and accounting background.

George Born (Architectural Historian): Alternate member since 2011. George earned his undergraduate degree in Art History/Comparative Literature at Brown University, a Master's degree in Historic Preservation at the University of Vermont, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in American Studies at Boston University. In addition to in-depth academic training, he has substantial practical experience in the field through historic preservation work in Providence, R.I., Key West, Florida, Washington, D.C., and Portland, ME.

Denis (DJ) Chagnon: (Landscape Architect): Alternate member since 2005. DJ is a principal at a Somerville landscape architectural firm experienced in working with historic properties and contexts. He and his wife purchased an 1890s home in Somerville in 2006, which they continually fix up, while raising 2 young children. DJ has a Bachelor's degree in design theory and a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture from Cornell University. His knowledge and experience with both landscaping and architectural history are helpful when discussing with applicants the different landscape materials and options available for their properties.

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Heather Davies (Architect): Alternate member since early 2015. Heather practices in a local firm located in a restored historic building in the Bow Street Union Square LHD. Her work as a project manager has ranged widely, from small-scale residential to larger-scale commercial and hotel projects, involving historic preservation and renovation, as well as new construction. As an architectural undergraduate at Ohio State University she studied abroad in Italy, and has since earned a Masters in Architecture from the Boston Architectural College. She loves living in West Somerville with her husband and new baby son.

Ryan Falvey (City Planner): Member since 2007. Ryan has an undergraduate degree in Urban Studies and a Master's degree in Education and Cognitive Development. Currently a vice president of a rapidly growing moving company, Ryan has extensive professional experience in management consulting and software systems design, and has developed and taught several courses at Harvard. Ryan became a preservation enthusiast after rehabilitating his mid-nineteenth century home in Somerville, for which he won a Director's Award from the Commission.

Eric Parkes (Architect/Historic District Resident): Member since 2009. Eric received his architectural degree in 1989 and started his own private practice in Somerville in 2007. He has extensive experience with the remodeling and preservation of older residential and municipal buildings throughout New England. He and his wife spent four years restoring the exterior of their locally designated historic house in Prospect Hill Somerville, purchased in 1999. They were very proud to win a Preservation Award from the Commission for the work they completed in 2004.

Derick Snare (Architect/Historic District Resident): Alternate member since 2002. Derick is an experienced architect in private practice in Somerville. He and his architect wife and daughter live in a designated historic house that they have been gradually restoring since purchasing it in the 1990s. Derick works closely with the Somerville High School CAD Program, providing technical assistance and guidance as the students create architectural drawings each year as part of the Commission's Annual Preservation Award Program.

Brad Stearns (Contractor/Real Estate Agent) was a Somerville-based general contractor with a specialty in Victorian era home repairs and restorations for many years. He likes to share with applicants his practical advice and approach to maintaining and preserving historic homes, based upon his extensive experience, including work on his own Victorian house. Formerly a landscaper, he founded the Somerville Garden Club, and remains an avid gardener. He recently returned to his real estate background and is now a sales agent in the Cambridge-Somerville area, offering his clients a host of relevant skills. Brad joined the SHPC in 2005, left temporarily in 2012, and re-joined in July 2013.

Mark Sternman (Citizen): Joined the SHPC in March 2015. Mark graduated from Dartmouth College with a government and philosophy degree and earned a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. As Director of Marketing and Communications for Mass Development, a quasi-governmental economic development authority, he has helped shaped the agency's messaging around preserving and redeveloping historic buildings around Massachusetts. When he first moved to Somerville in 1989 he discovered the book, "Beyond the Neck: The Architecture and Development of Somerville, Massachusetts," (now out of print) and he still treasures it today.

Todd Zinn (Real Estate Agent/Historic District Resident): Alternate member 2011-2014. A Regular member as of 2015. Todd has a Bachelor's degree in History from Bates College and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Wheelock College. After teaching elementary school for almost ten years, he became a stay-at-home parent for several years to his twin boys. Todd works as a real estate agent in the Greater Somerville and Cambridge area, as well as more recently as an Assistant Director of Admissions at a local private school. He and his partner own an 1875 historic home in Winter Hill which they fully enjoy for its architectural character and charm, Somerville landscape, and incredible view of the Boston skyline.